

Why Transformation Feels So Hard — 4 Psychological Hot Spots in Transformation

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A dramatic photograph of a volcanic eruption. A large, dark, and jagged crater rim is visible in the foreground. Inside the crater, a bright orange and red lava flow is visible. A massive, billowing plume of dark grey smoke and ash rises from the center of the crater, reaching high into the sky. The background is dark, suggesting a night or low-light environment.

**Transformation
Is Messy**

What's Missing in This Transformation Plan?

Stage-by-Stage Transformation Plan for Infrastructure and Operations

1. Adopt Public Cloud Services



Design Cloud Strategy



Establish Adoption Framework

2. Modernize Infrastructure



Enable Programmatic Control



Optimize Platform Delivery



Assess Infrastructure Placement

3. Optimize Workloads



Assess Application Placement



Architect and Implement Workloads

4. Enable Hybrid Integration



Select and Establish Connectivity



Federate Identity and Security

5. Automate and Govern



Define Policies



Evaluate DevOps



Broker Services

6. Operate and Protect



Design for Continuity

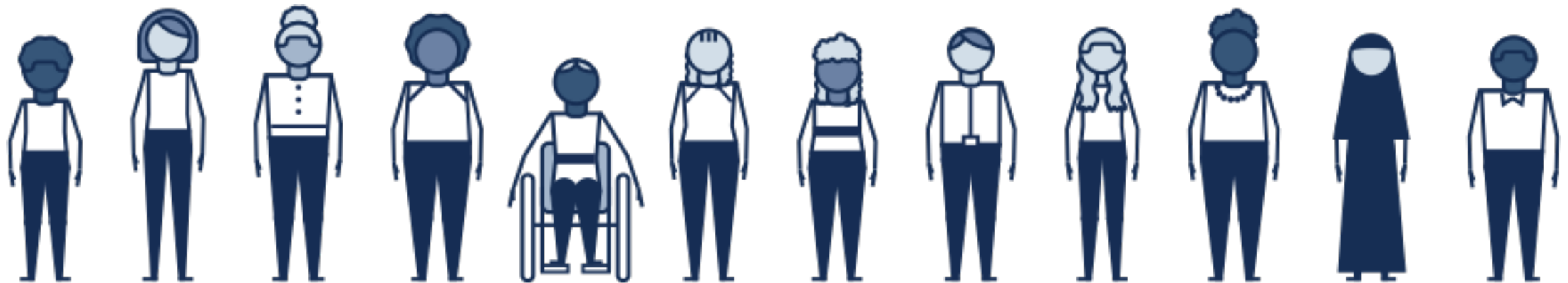


Evolve Operations Tools



Monitor and Analyze Applications

The Humans Are Missing!



The Emotional Life of Transformation Is Messy

Stage-by-Stage Transformation Plan for Infrastructure and Operations

1. Adopt Public Cloud Services



2. Establish Foundational Framework

3. Implement Infrastructure
Training complete: We got mad skills



Optimize Platform Delivery



Assess Infrastructure Placement

4. Optimize Workloads



5. Assess and Prioritize Applications

MVP wasn't viable

Architect and Implement Hybrid Cloud

4. Enable Hybrid Integration



Select and Implement Connectivity



Define Identity and Access

5. Automate and Govern



Define Policies



Evaluate DevOps

Self-organizing team organizes a mutiny

6. Operate and Protect



We did it — Pizza party!

Evolve Operations Tools



Monitor and Analyze Applications

Assume Irrationality, but in Predictable Places



Your People Are Feeling Transformation Fatigue.



Transformation Contains the Perfect Psychological Storm to Impede Change.

Beware 4 Psychological Hot Spots

Top hotspots tend to manifest earlier, such as when a change is announced.

Dissonance



Triggers



Delay



Effort



Bottom hotspots tend to manifest later, such as when daily activities are affected.

Hotspot No. 1 — Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive Dissonance is the psychological conflict resulting from incongruous beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously.

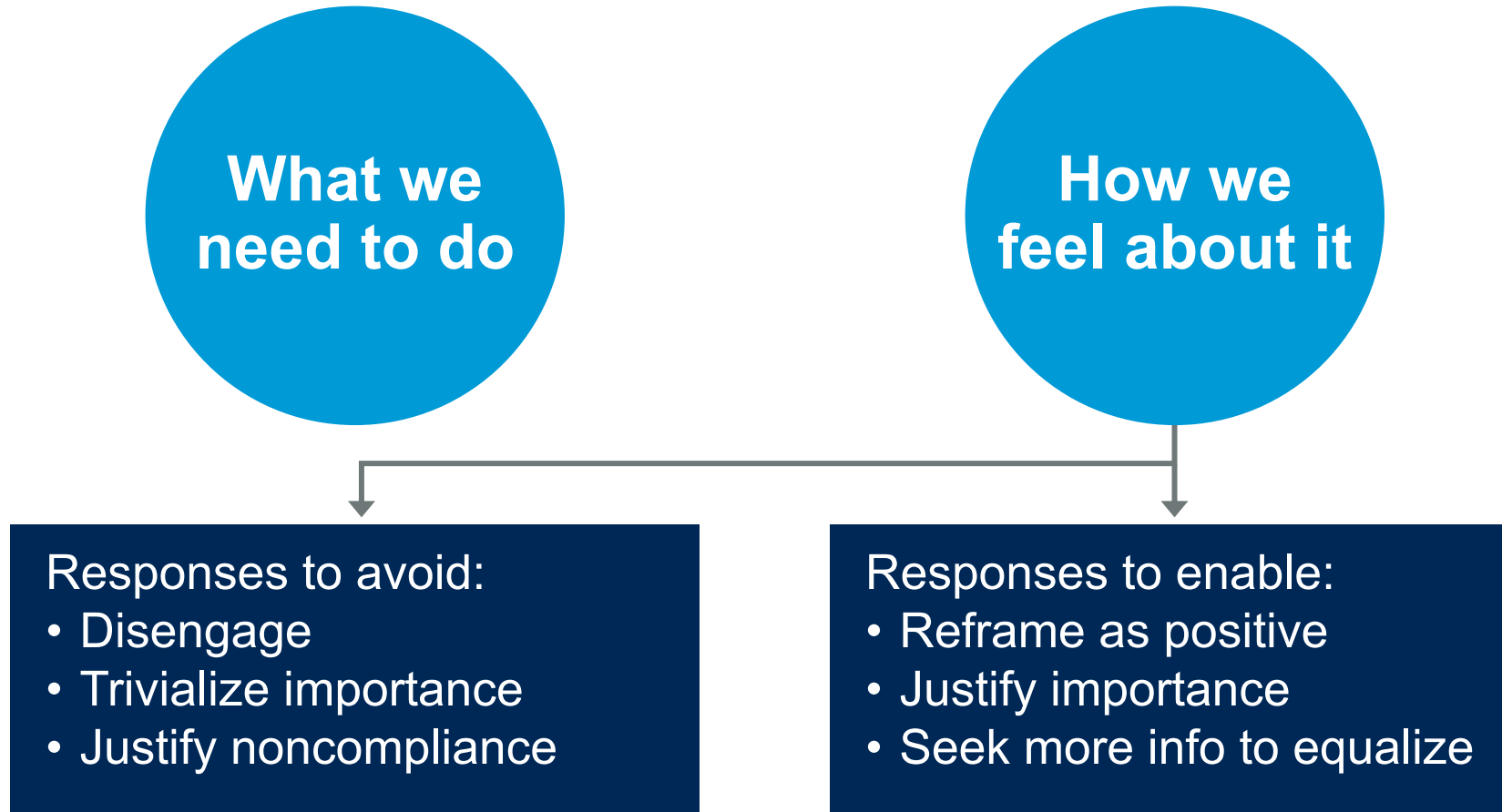
— Merriam Webster Dictionary

Specifically: What we understand intellectually doesn't reflect what we feel emotionally.



To Reduce Cognitive Dissonance, Something Has to Give

Assuming this is fixed we need to work on this



Tactics for Cognitive Dissonance

Preventative Maintenance

Provide learning zones to train and engage in new roles and behaviors.

Early Warning Signs

Prepare people for negative emotions and acknowledge their validity.

Reexamine rewards, incentives, and expectations for new behaviors.

Late Stage Crisis Avoidance

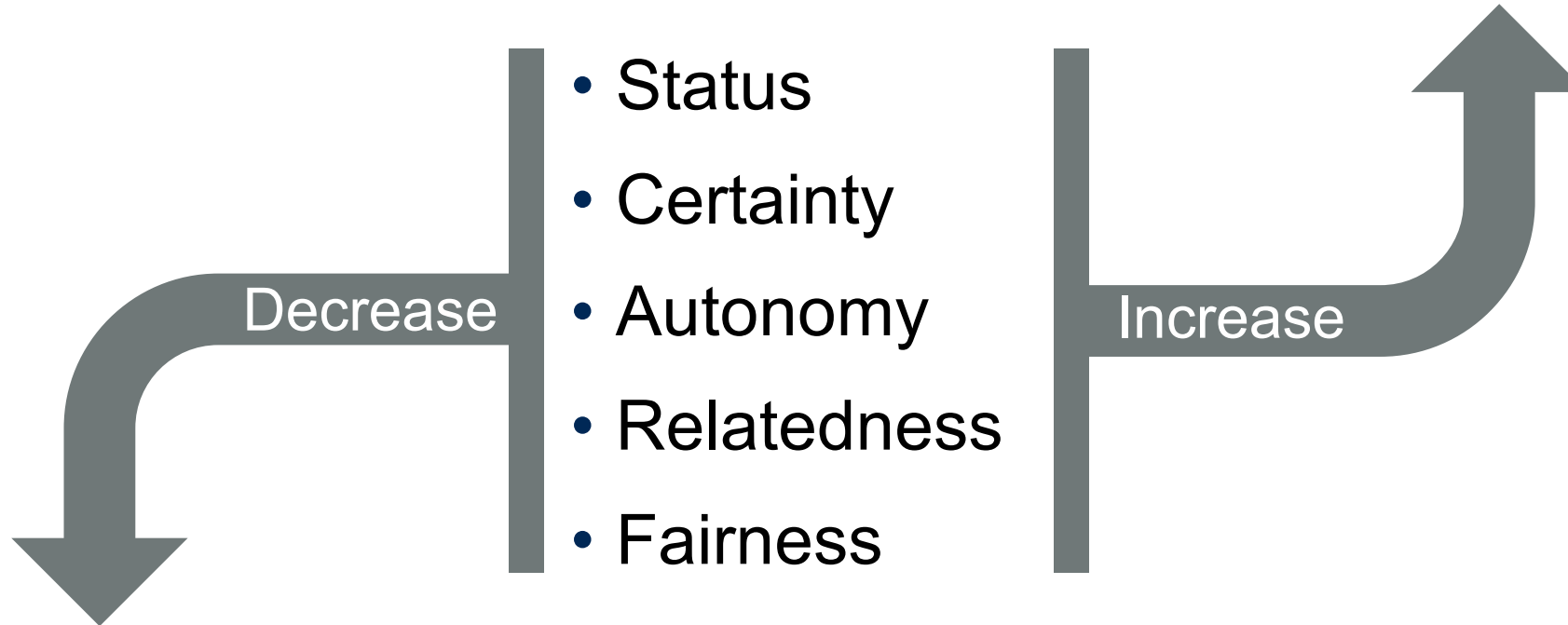
Build up immunity by repeated exposure.

A close-up photograph of a lit matchstick on the left, with a bright yellow and orange flame. It is positioned as if about to light a row of ten unlit matchsticks that are standing vertically in a line to its right. The background is a solid dark blue. The text 'Hot Spot No. 2 — Emotional Triggers' is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font in the upper right area.

Hot Spot No. 2 — Emotional Triggers

Do You Perceive a Threat or a Reward?

“Toward” State — Reward

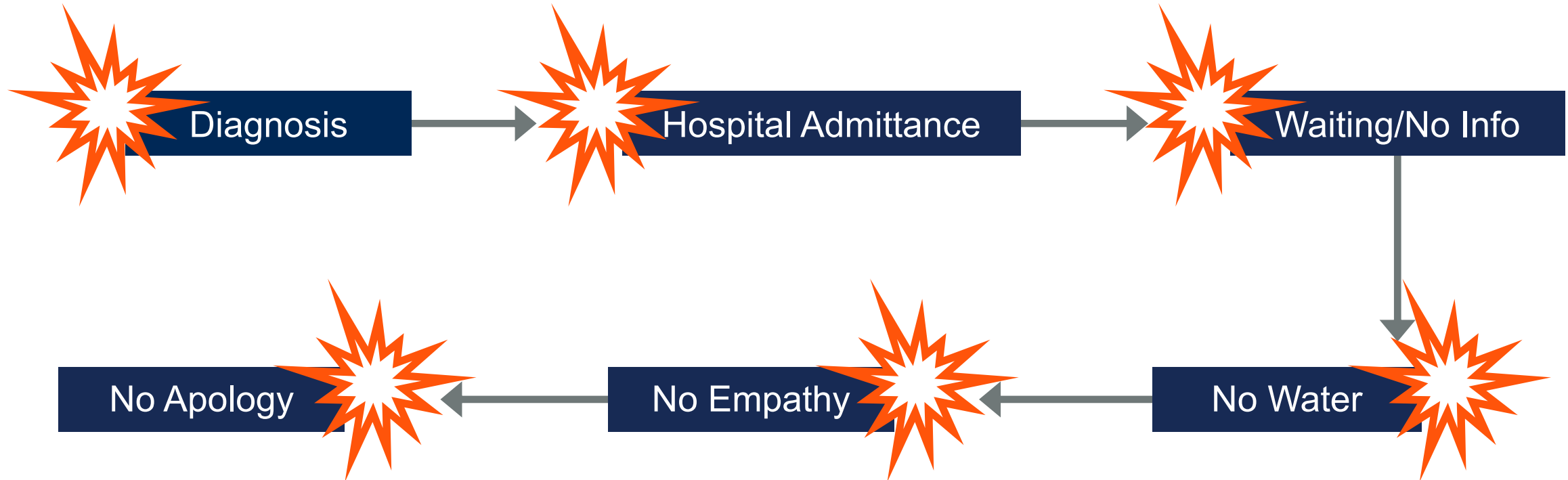


“Away” State — Threat

Source: D. Rock. “Your Brain at Work: Strategies for Overcoming Distraction, Regaining Focus, and Working Smarter All Day Long.” HarperCollins Publishers. 2009.

Emotional Triggers Occur When High Uncertainty and Big Consequences Coincide

Common emotional triggers on a patient journey through disease and treatment:



Tactics for Emotional Triggers

Preventative Maintenance

Communicate the goals and the plan:

- What is and what is **not** changing.
- What will happen and when.

Early Warning Signs

Banish “never” phrases like “get on board.”

Leave 50% of communication time for questions.

Late Stage Crisis Avoidance

Respond quickly and early to strong emotions, acknowledging their validity.

Provide choices in how people can respond.

Hot Spot No. 3 — Delayed Gratification



Delaying Gratification Is a Kale-Chocolate Problem



Tactics for Delayed Gratification

Preventative Maintenance

Practice delaying gratification by starting small, with something that doesn't matter much.

Early Warning Signs

Make a “chocolate list” of products and experiences the team can deliver quickly and relatively easily. Sprinkle the “chocolate” throughout the transformation, as a motivator.

Late Stage Crisis Avoidance

Build habits toward long-term ROI (kale) to fall back on in times of stress.

Hot Spot No. 4 — Cognitive Strain vs. Cognitive Ease



Cognitive Strain



New roles and tasks

More vigilant

Bad mood

Less creative

Poor design

Feels effortful

Cognitive Ease



Repeated experience

Feels familiar

Good mood

Feels true

Clear display

Feels effortless

Source: D. Kahneman. "Thinking Fast and Slow." Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 2013.

“A general ‘law of least effort’ applies to cognitive as well as physical exertion ... if there are several ways of achieving the same goal, people will eventually gravitate to the least demanding course of action. Laziness is built deep into our nature.”

Daniel Kahneman in “Thinking Fast and Slow”

Tactics for Reducing Strain and Increasing Ease

Preventative Maintenance

Define exactly what people have to do first, when they encounter something new.

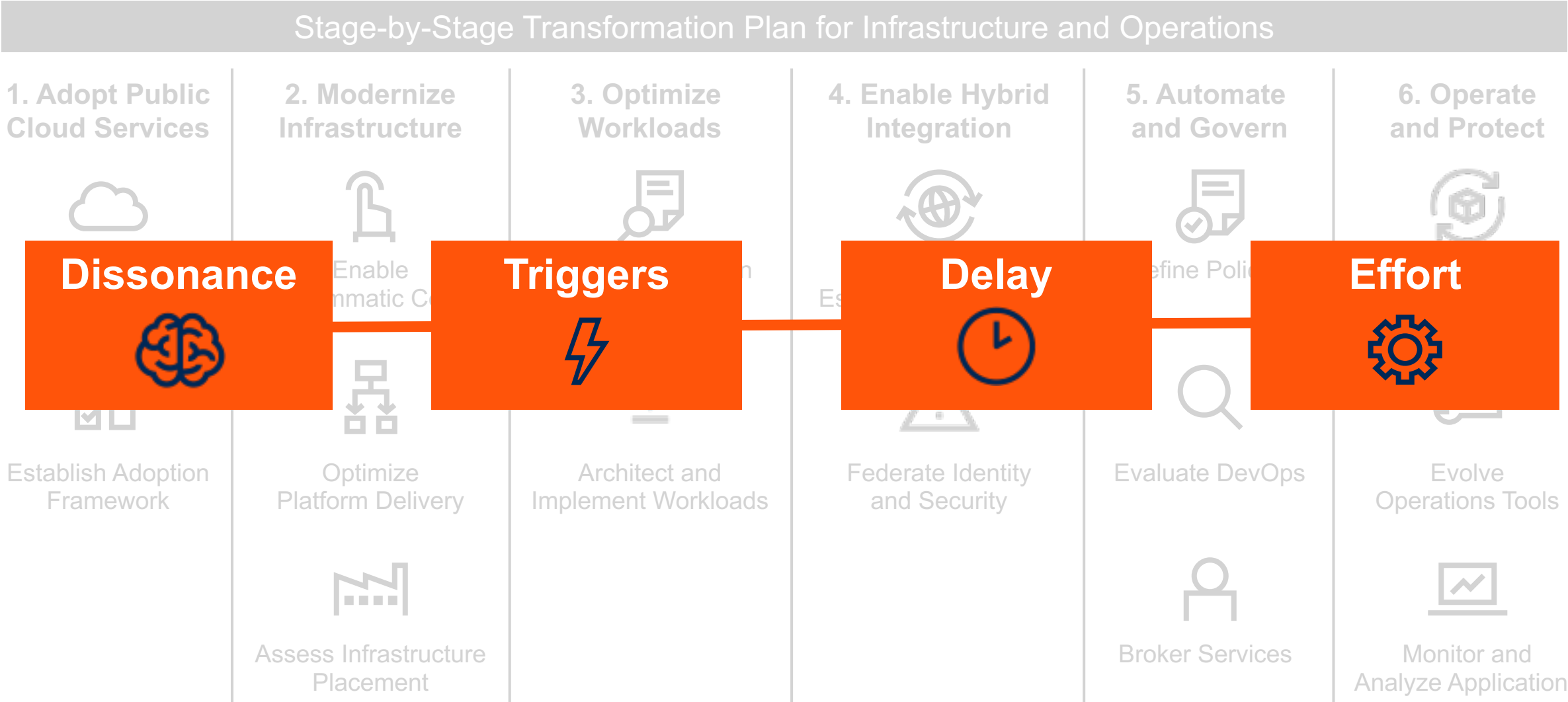
Early Warning Signs

Remove any friction between the user and the first step they have to take. For example, make login details easy to find, at all times.

Late Stage Crisis Avoidance

Script the full path so that people are ready to prepare and practice.

The Emotional Life of Transformation Can Be Planned



Recommendations

- ④ Adopt a psychological approach to transformation and change.
- ④ Raise your EQ and that of your colleagues by planning for the emotional life of a transformation journey.
- ④ Focus on the four psychological hotspots of dissonance, triggers, delay and effort.
- ④ Provide leadership with communications and tools to focus on the hotspots from the start.
- ④ Be as rigorous about cultural change and adaptation, as you would be about project goals and completion.

Recommended Gartner Research

- 🔍 [Introduction to 4 Psychological Hot Spots in Transformation](#)
Mary Mesaglio, Jackie Fenn and Cristina Lazaro (G00713744)
- 🔍 [The Three Magical Ingredients of Transformation](#)
Mary Mesaglio and Darren Topham (G00388448)
- 🔍 [Use Culture Hacking to Foster a Growth Mindset and Accelerate Digital Transformation](#)
Graham Waller, Mary Mesaglio and Elise Olding (G00373821)
- 🔍 [5 Steps for CIOs to Cultivate a Digital Leadership Mindset and Behaviors](#)
Graham Waller and Elise Olding (G00381811)
- 🔍 [Toolkit: 2019 Collection of 85 Culture Hacks From the Real World](#)
Mary Mesaglio, Elise Olding and Erik Van Ommeren (G00444838)
- 🔍 [The Psychology of Serial Innovation](#)
Mary Mesaglio and Jackie Fenn (G00250852)

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